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ABSTRACT

After a short background introduction on educational and vocational guidance in West Germany, this paper, written for counselors and educators, focuses on three main areas: (1) a 3-year training program for all West German employment counselors; (2) a school orientation program offered to grade 8 students by the employment counselors; and (3) a microcounseling unit on decision making skills, which is taught to the employment counselors during their training program. Course work in the training program, including career development, group dynamics, documentation, interview techniques, sociology and psychology, and elective courses, is discussed. The internship program, consisting of three, 3-month practica and one 6-month practicum, is described, as well as two unique features of the training program, the school career orientation program and the microcounseling unit on decision making. The purposes, format, and benefits of the orientation program, which was intended to provide students in each of the three educational streams with career information and post secondary school training opportunities, are discussed. The paper concludes with a description of the decision making unit, which was developed to provide counselors-in-training with the skills (e.g., goal setting, alternatives, establishing evaluation criteria, making decisions, and preparation for setbacks) needed to help clients make decisions. (Author/BL)

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THE TRAINING AND ROLE OF WEST GERMAN EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS

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ABSTRACT

After providing the listener with a short background of educational and vocational guidance in West Germany, the speaker focused on three main areas:

1. the three-year training program for all West German employment counselors,
2. the school orientation program offered to grade eight students by the employment counselors, and
3. the microcounseling unit on decision-making skills; a unit taught to the employment counselors during their training program.

Course work in the training program consisted of career development courses, group dynamics courses, documentation courses, courses on interview techniques, sociology and psychology courses, and a number of elective courses. The internship program consisted of three 3-month practica and one 6-month practicum.

Two unique features of the training program were the school career orientation program and the microcounselling unit on decision-making. The orientation program was intended to provide students in each of the three educational streams with career information and post secondary school training opportunities. The decision-making unit was developed to provide counselors-in-training with the skills needed to help clients make decisions.

THE TRAINING AND ROLE OF WEST GERMAN EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS

I. INTRODUCTION

In my presentation today, I will talk briefly about the background of educational and vocational guidance in West Germany. Then I will focus on the following three major areas:

1. the three-year training program for all West German employment counselors,
2. the school orientation program offered to grade eight students by the employment counselors, and
3. the microcounselling unit on decision-making skills; a unit taught to the employment counselors during their training program.

II. BACKGROUND

In the 11 states in West Germany, education comes under the jurisdiction of each state, while the vocational guidance service is administered by the Federal Office of Employment. Since there are few counselors in German schools, career guidance for the students is provided partially by the teachers, but a major role is played by the Career Counseling Division of the Federal Office of Employment. The major responsibilities of this division include: individual counseling, help in looking for a job, preparation of career materials for students, parents, and others, and presentations of career orientation programs in the schools.

The counselors at the employment centers who provide these services have all been trained in a specific occupation or trade, have had a minimum of 2 years work experience, and have completed a 3-year counselor training program at a special college (Fachhochschule) in Mannheim.

Counselors usually make initial contact with students in grade eight, that is, a year before students make a definite, usually binding, career choice. To understand the importance of grades eight and nine in terms of career choice, it is necessary to realize that the German student is placed into a specific educational stream at the end of grade four. Each German state has a primary school level (Grundschule) that includes kindergarten and four additional years of schooling. The secondary level begins in grade five and the student is placed into one of the following three programs:

(see Overhead Transparency No. 1)

1. Hauptschule - a 5-year program leading to entry into trades and semi-skilled occupations;

2. Realschule - a 6-year program leading to jobs in public administration, commerece, and industry, or to further education in polytechnical college (Fachhochschule); and,

3. Gymnasium - a program consisting of 6 years in Secondary I followed by 3 years in Secondary II that qualifies a student for further education at a university.

After students have completed the Hauptschule or Realschule,

they either begin a 3-year occupational internship (half-time at work and half-time in a vocational school) or they attend one of Germany's many occupational schools for 3 years. In 1976, 59% of the students were in the Hauptschule, 21% in the Realschule, and 15% entered the Gymnasium. The remaining 5% were in special schools, mainly for the learning disabled (Busshoff, 1980).

There are very few school counselors in West German schools. This overhead gives you some idea.

(See Overhead Transparency No. 2)

Guidance services in West Germany are divided into the Educational Guidance Services and the Vocational Guidance Services. The Educational Guidance Service in Germany operates at a regional and local level. The major mandate is to assist with educational concerns and decision making. Some specific tasks that have been assigned to the Educational Guidance Service are:

1. providing students with information regarding secondary school program, university and college programs and course selection;
2. some individual counseling usually related to learning difficulties and behavior problems;
3. parent counselling and consultation;
4. in-service programs for teachers particularly in the area of educational psychology and measurement and evaluation; and
5. promoting innovations in education, such as:
   a) checking the validity of new standardized tests,

b) special student placement, and

c) model schools.

The Vocational Guidance Service is assigned to the Federal Government. This Vocational Guidance Service is separated from the general education system as well as from the federal vocational training institutions, and is an agency that serves as a bridge between the educational and occupational systems.

The major principle of the Vocational Guidance Service can be summarized as follows:

1. vocational guidance is voluntary,
2. the counselee is responsible for her/himself,
3. counselor must be impartial and fair,
4. individuality and confidentiality, are very important, and
5. accurate and current career information must be presented.

These principles, when translated into methods and tasks, consists of career orientation classes, vocational counseling, the placement in apprenticeships programs and the promotion of professional training.

In the next part of my presentation, I will outline how the counselors are prepared for the German Vocational Guidance Service.

III. TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS.

West Germany has 146 employment centers and approximately 500 branch offices. The administrative organization of each of these employment centers is presented on the following two overhead transparencies:

(see Overhead Transparencies 3 and 4)

Each year the 146 employment centers determine the number of employment counselors, placement counselors, and other employment center workers that they will need in three years time. Candidates are then interviewed for these future openings, and successful applicants are sent to the training college in Mannheim for a three year training program. For example, if the employment office in Frankfurt project a need for 27 new counsellors by 1987, they would send 27 candidates to the college in Mannheim this year (1983).

Approximately 500 new students begin the program each year, and since it is a three-year program, there are about 1,500 trainees at the college in any one year.

A new facility was built in Mannheim in 1982 at a cost of nearly 60 million dollars. The new college has very modern equipment and facilities and classroom space for over 1000 students. The building is used 12 months of the year, and at any given time one-third to one half of the students are on a field experience. Thus, there will only be approximately 750-1000 students in the classrooms during any period of time.

All students receive a salary from the employment center that sent them on the three-year training program. In some ways the format is not unlike an apprenticeship program except the majority of the work in the three years is done at the college rather than at the work place. The salary during this three year period is 50 - 80 percent of the

salary students will receive when they begin working at the employment center after graduation.

I saw some advantages, as well as disadvantages, with this program in Mannheim:

1. A comfortable student life with students receiving up to 80% of the regular salary of an employment counsellor.
2. Job security upon graduation.
3. College professors were reluctant to fail students, since failing a student in third year, erased three years of study, as well as any possibility of the student of getting a job in counseling. There was low motivation among many students. They knew they had a job waiting for them.
4. There was little timetable flexibility. There was less student freedom. Even holidays had to be syncronized with those of the workers at the employment center that had sent them to the college.
5. There was a heavy emphasis in the program on field experience or internship. Students had a chance to do some reality testing during each year of their program. There appeared to be many disagreements between the models (mostly American) that professors talked about in class and the traditional model used in the field.

What then, are some of the major features of the three year counselor training program in Mannheim? In the 36-month program, students:

1. spend 18 months in class,
2. have 3 three-month practica and one six-month practicum, and

3. have a total of 3 months of holidays.

The course work is not unlike the course work in American and Canadian counselor training programs.

1. Career development courses.

   Theorists that are discussed in these courses are Supor, Krumboltz, Schlossberg, Tiedeman and Holland.

2. Group dynamics courses.

   This is an area that the Germans are really trying to develop. As recently as 1975, the German Vocational Guidance Service had their first group counselling experiment. They attempted to determine the economic and technical advantages of using group counseling.

   In discussing group counselling with a number of professors in Germany, I came to the conclusion that the discussion group was the major type of group used; a group where the emphasis was on improved awareness rather than on improving skills or changing behavior. One translated definition of group work that I read was that 'group counseling is a means of immediate and enhanced communication between a plurality of talkers and listeners'.

3. Documentation courses.

   These courses consisted mainly of learning the many, many German rules and regulations related to apprenticeship, labor relations, and so forth.

4. Interview techniques.

   All counselor trainees were made aware of a "prescribed

counseling format." Individual professors experimented with many models, but most 'in-the-field' counselors told the trainees that the old, 'tried-and-true' method was the best. This traditional method was not unlike a highly directive, trait and factor interviewing session.

5. Introductory sociology courses.
6. Educational psychology courses.
7. Electives.

Professors offered courses that were of specia. interest to them. Among the courses offered as electives were workshops in developing microcounseling skills, leadership skills courses, and law and counseling courses.

8. Tutorial classes in teaching a unit in career education.

I will say more about these school orientation classes later.

The second major component of the counsellor training program (beside course work), was the 15 months of internship consisting of three, 3-month practica and one, 6-month practicum. The field supervisor told trainees what they should do. Counseling supervision consisted not only of review of audio tapes, but also of having the supervisor present during counseling sessions.

I talked to a large number of students about their internship. Most saw the internship as the most worthwhile part of their three-year program, but many were frustrated with the supervision from the "old guard"; namely, counselors who had never received counselor training themselves, and whose methods differed tremendously from the

methods espoused by college instructors.

IV. SCHOOL CAREER ORIENTATION PROGRAM

I wish to make some further comments about two innovative aspects of the counselor preparation program that I alluded to when I briefly outlined the course work that students take. Employment counselors provide all eight grade students in West Germany with a career orientation program, consisting of a minimum of two, 2-hour sessions. There are a number of purposes for these classes:

1. to provide students in each of the three educational streams with career information and post-secondary school training opportunities;
2. to provide the grade eight students with an opportunity to discuss their individual career needs;
3. to discuss with students the factors involved in career decision-making; and
4. to provide students with an overview of the services and materials available at each employment center.

Several weeks before employment counselors visit a particular grade eight class, all the students are asked to complete a questionnaire similar to the one on this transparency.

(See Overhead Transparency No. 5)

Much time was spent on providing a specific program for each class. Counselors-in-training spent parts of a whole semester attempting to provide an excellent four-hour career orientation unit. They talked to the eighth graders' home room teacher beforehand, and they spent hours

individually with one of the college professors (with an education background) going over behavioral objectives, timing each activity, preparing and getting audio-visual aids and exercises approved and so forth.

Student employment counselors would then "dry run" their presentations for other student counselors and receive critical appraisal. What I am trying to say is that much time and energy was put into these orientation sessions, because the senior members of employment centers felt that this was their only contact with the students in the schools, and they wanted students to know that they provided services for a life time. I observed eight career orientation sessions, and I must say I was impressed with the efforts that had been taken to make the sessions both interesting and informative.

Generally, the first two-hour class was devoted to some discussion of decision-making and the need for students to evaluate their aptitudes, skills, interests and personality in terms of career suitability. During this first session, counselors also informed students of the services that the counselors and employment center could provide. Besides providing individual and group counseling and specific information on occupations, the Employment Service has developed a number of very readable and informative career materials for students. Each secondary school stream had its own version of the key materials. The booklet Mach's Richtig (Do It Right) (Bundesanstalt fuer Arbeit, 1980b) provided students with tips and directions on how to plan for a future career. The most widely used materials by students were the STEP - Selbsterkundungsprogramm zur Berufswahl (STEP - Self-Help Program for Career Choosing) (Bundesanstalt fuer Arbeit, 1980c). This self-help

program was developed to help students ascertain their personal interests and aptitudes. Berufs Aktuell (Current Careers) (Bundesanstalt fuer Arbeit, 1980a), a 300-page paperback (revised annually), contained job descriptions of occupations in Germany, training possibilities for students and the occupational outlook for most occupations.

Counselors concluded the first session by giving each student a packet of addressed postcards; each postcard being a separate order form for the materials just described and for other career materials.

The second visitation by counselors followed some weeks after the first session, and during this second visit counselors attempted to help individual students learn more about the duties and expectations of specific careers and the training possibilities for the jobs. Unlike the typical North American junior high school student, approximately two-thirds of all the students in the Real and Hauptschulen (80 percent of all students) indicated that they knew the occupation they wished to begin after school (Busshoff, 1980). Consequently, the need to check out student suitability for specific jobs was seen as very important. This second session, dealing with job specifics, influenced students a great deal. In a study (Trinemeier, & Ertelt, 1978) with German eighth grade students, 31 percent of the students who had made tentative career choices, indicated that they needed to rethink their career choice as a result of the orientation sessions. Many of these students with increased doubts about their career choice realized that they needed further career counseling, and in the months following the career orientation sessions, 60 percent of the students visited an Employment Center for counseling

(Busshuff, 1980).

The second session ended with the employment counselors encouraging teachers to use the many career materials available, and to arrange for student visitations to employment centers, to special state career information centers, and to job sites. Students were also informed that counselors were prepared to meet with parents to support them in their efforts with the career development of their children.

Some indication of the value of these career orientation programs is provided by the number of students who come to the employment centers for individual and group counseling soon after the orientation programs. In the three to six months following the career orientation sessions, 60 percent of the grade eight students visited an Employment Center for counseling (Busshoff, 1980). Teachers increased the number of career site visitations and often added career components (report writing, job analysis reports) to the regular curriculum. Informal estimates by career consultants in Mannheim and Nuernberg indicated that career site visits had more than doubled since the career orientation program had been introduced. Some states (Berlin, Baden-Wuerttemberg) have also added credit courses in careers that follow the orientation programs.

There are several implications of this West German career orientation program for North American counselors. Too often junior and senior high school students think a visit to the government employment office is an absolute last resort to finding a job or receiving career counseling, since they do not appreciate the many services offered by most employment centers in the 1980's. In Canada, few university-

bound students visit employment centers, and few high school drop-outs are aware of the special services employment centers offer relating to up-grading programs, apprenticeships and financial assistance. An orientation program offered by employment counselors could provide students with this information.

School visits by employment counselors could have other informational and public relations value. When visiting the schools, counselors could see first-hand what the schools were doing in the area of career information and guidance, and they could plan their orientation sessions accordingly. Furthermore, the employment counselors could establish important contacts with teachers and school counselors; contacts that could benefit students when they visited employment centers for counseling.

North American school counselors could derive other benefits from this type of career orientation program. The use of a questionnaire allowed students to indicate the topics that interested them the most. By using this information, not only could employment counselors respond to students' expressed needs and interests, but school counselors were able to introduce additional information related to this interest into guidance units or career classes. School counselors and teachers also benefitted from the personal contact with employment counselors, since the employment counselors provided them with current career information and career forecasts, as well as provided advise on planning additional career development activities for regular classes or career units.

V. DECISION-MAKING MICROCOUNSELING UNIT.

In 1981, Professor Achim Ertelt and I received permission to introduce a decision-making unit for counselors-in-training who were about to begin their third and final year of training. Allen Ivey was in Germany at this time and we received permission to translate his book on microcounsling into German. In this translation we added a unit on decision-making and various other aspects of microcounseling that pertained more to the German Counselor.

As with other microcounseling units, a scaled-down interviewing model was used, where counselors practiced individual counseling skills. Microcounseling is ideally suited for small groups of students to learn a number of skills over a short period of time.

The main reason for implementing a decision-making unit was because of students' expressed need for help in this area. In their course work as well as at the employment centers, students had been inundated with career information. They had studied and practiced many beginning counseling skills, and they needed help in integrating the skills of the counselor-counselee relationship and the abundance of readily available career information with the counselee's desire to make an important, usually binding, career decision. The students' experiences with the counselees at the employment centers had shown them that the young people that came from the schools for counseling, as well as the older employment-seeker, expected some highly specific, directive assistance in decision making.

There was other evidence to support holding a decision making unit at this time of the program. I mentioned earlier that employment

counseling students had to present a four-hour career orientation program to eight grade pupils. The greatest expressed need of these pupils (Trinemeier, & Ertelt, 1978) was to have counselors help them with decisions relating to career information and the weighing of career alternatives. It should be pointed out that at this time German pupils make key decisions regarding career choices; decisions that are major turning points for their lives, since, in Germany, choice of career is related even more closely to prestige in the community and life's opportunities.

The model that we developed in West Germany was to provide short-term counseling for people who needed to make important career decisions. The model included specific skill training in each of five, identified steps of decision making:

1. Conceptualizing the problem and setting goals. To help the counselees conceptualize their problems, establish priorities and set goals, it was necessary to direct their attention to "choice points" by providing greater directionality and specificity. The single skills that were seen as important in helping counselees with this step were: encouragement, cognitive restructuring and socratic dialoguing.

2. Facilitating the generation of alternatives. To facilitate the generation of alternatives for decision making, counselors practiced the following skills: brain storming, encouragement of divergent thinking, and verbal reinforcement.

3. Weighing alternatives and establishing criteria for evaluation.

As in the goal setting phase of decision-making, it is necessary for the counselor to help the counselee be specific. Observable, measurable criteria must be established. Single skills that were practiced for this step were: concreteness, confrontation and structuring.

4. Making the decision. In order to assist counselors in helping counselees with decisions, a continum of three skills were practiced during this step of the decision making process: positive challenge, persuasion and bargaining.

5. Preparation for setbacks. The purpose of this last phase in decision-making was to help counselees remain committed to alternatives after spending some time in making the decision. Counselees needed to anticipate future risks and losses, to know how to reassure themselves, and to see their decisions from another perspective. Specific skills training was provided in reassurance and role reversal.

Basically, the microcounseling process in each class was structured into four distinct steps: cognitive learning, videotape modeling, single skill practise, and group feed back. In the first step, students read and discussed with the leader a number of materials describing the particular skill. Paper-pencil exercises were frequently used to help students to understand better specific decision-making skills. By first gaining a cognitive understanding of each skill, the students were in a better position to understand the subsequent skills modeled by the leader and the skills demonstrated on videotape. Next, colored, videotape cassettes demonstrating negative and positive performances of the skills were shown and discussed. Thirdly, each student practiced a

particular skill with another member of the group for five minutes. All sessions were videotaped on one of the numerous video recorders available. Lastly, all members of the group, including the leader, discussed each student's videotaped microcounseling session.

We attempted to offer a laboratory-like learning approach in which there was a blend of a structured, cognitive component, active involvement in all steps of the decision making process, and constant contact with, and feedback from, other group members.

Let me end the formal part of my presentation. I welcome any questions. I am willing to elaborate on any aspect of the training and role of West German employment counselors.

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GERMANY

I HAUPTSCHULE

- a 5-year program leading to entry into trades and semi-skilled occupations;

II REALSCHULE

- a 6-year program leading to jobs in public administration, commerce and industry or further education in a polytechnical college (Fachhochschule); and,

III GYMNASIUM

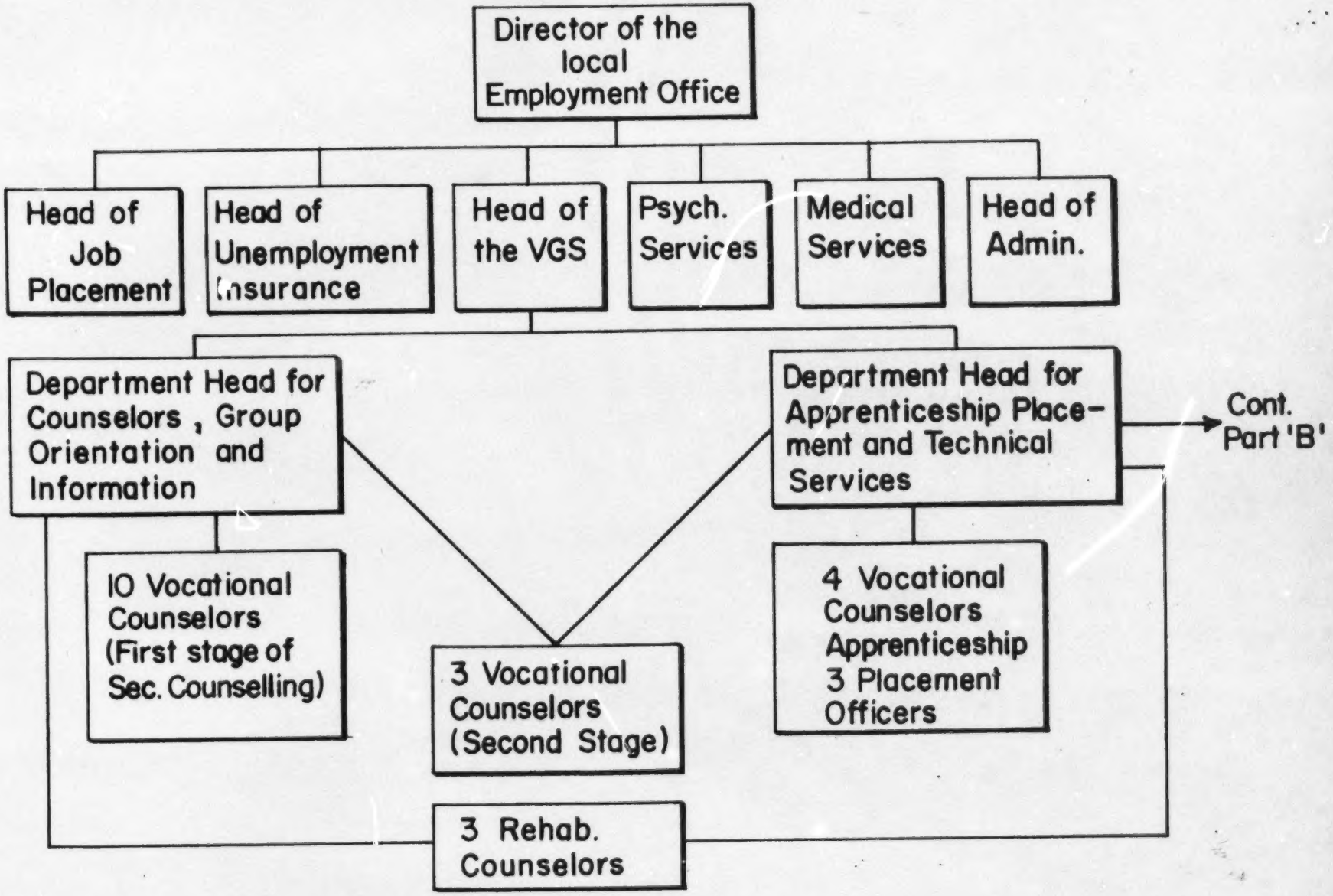
- a program consisting of 6 years in Secondary I followed by 3 years in Secondary II that qualifies a student for further education at a university.

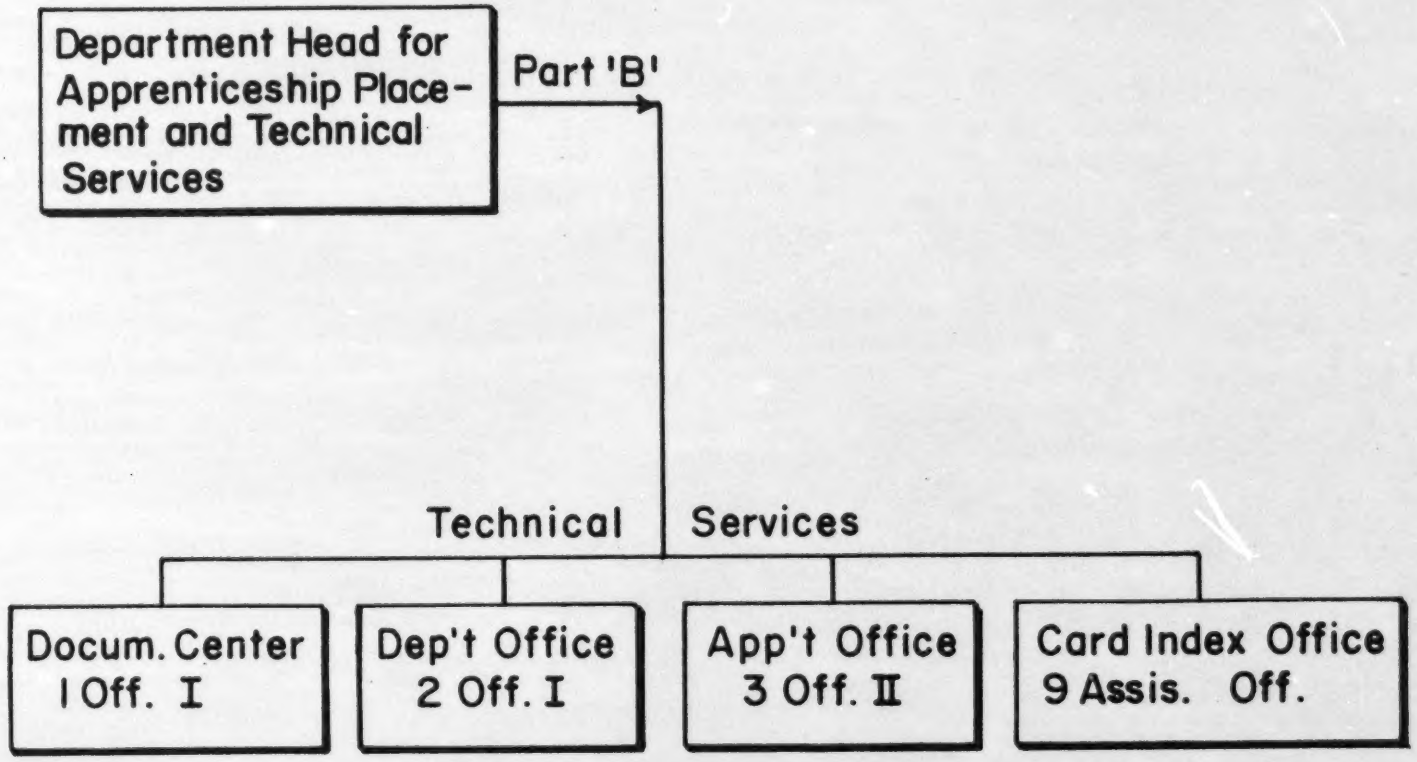
SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN WEST GERMANY
1979

STATE	NO. OF STUDENTS	NO. OF COUNSELORS	RATIO
Bremen	147,223	10	1:14,720
Hessen	1,032,930	200	1:5,160
Saarland	154,632	25	1:6,180
Schleswig-Holstein	414,230	27	1:15,340

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY NO. 2

A TYPICAL VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT


Director of the local Employment Office
Head of Job Placement
Head of Unemployment Insurance
Head of the VGS
Psych. Services
Medical Services
Head of Admin.
Department Head for Counselors, Group Orientation and Information
Department Head for Apprenticeship Placement and Technical Services
Cont. Part 'B'
10 Vocational Counselors (First stage of Sec. Counselling)
3 Vocational Counselors (Second Stage)
4 Vocational Counselors Apprenticeship
3 Placement Officers
3 Rehab. Counselors



OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY NO. 4

Career Orientation Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to help us prepare for our career orientation program in your school. All responses will remain anonymous. Thank you for your help.

1. What are your personal expectations from the future visit of the employment counselors to your class ?
2. Have you made a career decision yet?Yes / No / Don't Know
3. What career plans have you made ?
4. What problems might you encounter in fulfilling your choice of career ?
5. Where and with whom have you discussed your career choice ?Name individuals , places , or materials .
6. How much do you already know about the education and training required for the jobs you are interested in ?Very much / Much / Very little / Little or nothing
7. How good are the chances of your career wishes being fulfilled ?Very good / Good / So-So / Not good

cont'd next page

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY NO. 5

8. Which of the following topics interest you the most ?We would like to discuss the most frequently indicated topics when we visit your class . Please rank any four topics , where "1" is the most important topic for you.

Topic	Rank
How can I find out if I am suited for a particular job career ?	_____
How can an employment counselor help me ?	_____
How can I learn more about specific careers?	_____
What must I beware of when I visit certain industries or companies ?	_____
What further education is open to me after I finish school ?	_____
What can I do if I do not have enough education for a certain job ?	_____
What is the future outlook for the job I am interested in ?	_____
Other topics I am interested in that are not listed	_____

THE FIVE STEPS OF DECISION-MAKING

1. Conceptualizing the problem and Setting Goals
2. Facilitating the Generation of Alternatives
3. Weighing Alternatives and Establishing Criteria for Evaluation
4. Making the Decision
5. Preparation for Setbacks